

## **Culture Committee - CC-8-02(p.3)**

**Date:** 25<sup>th</sup> April 2002

**Time:** 2.00pm-4.00pm

**Venue:** Committee Room 2, National Assembly Building

### **Cultural Tourism**

#### **Introduction**

The Wales Tourist Board (WTB) has defined the make-up of Wales's cultural tourism product as being the *"Performing, visual and literary arts, museums, built and social heritage, historic landscapes and gardens, crafts, architecture, design, film, religion, broadcasting, food and sport. Included in these are the Welsh and English languages, traditional, contemporary and emerging, professional and amateur forms of cultural expression"*.

The Welsh language and Wales' bilingual culture are important factors in identifying Wales as a separate and unique part of the United Kingdom. The Economic Development Committee in its evidence to this review highlighted the fact that the Welsh language was a key factor *"that bodies such as the Wales Tourist Board integrate into their marketing strategies in order to enhance the image they are trying to promote"*.

This paper considers the evidence received about the potential of the Welsh language to the tourist industry and suggests some possible issues for Committee consideration. It should be read in conjunction with CC-8-02(p.2) which focuses on economic and community development

#### **What the consultation told us**

Cultural tourism was not one of the major issues to emerge during the course of the review, but nevertheless, it did elicit several comments about the potential of bilingualism as a critical success factor for tourism. WTB's evidence to the Committee recognised this fact, *"time and time again the Welsh language has proven to be a unique selling-point for Wales and a wonderful lead in to other cultural and social aspects that makes our tourism offering in Wales so distinctive"*.

WTB's role in promoting Wales as a bilingual nation was largely praised during the consultation, although some respondents did feel that not enough was being done in this direction. One respondent, praised WTB's *"Achieving Our Potential"* document as being

*"peppered with constructive references to the contribution of the language, culture, heritage, identity and national image to the success of Welsh tourism" and that the document "offered an opportunity to implement a variety of projects which use Welsh culture in a creative and dignified way".*

Early in the review, the Committee heard of the potentially negative effects of the tourist industry to the Welsh language. A report by researchers at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth found that the *"tourist industry and its indirect effects have contributed to the decline of the national tongue and continue to threaten its future as a vibrant community language.....considerable disquiet still exists within our host communities regarding the Anglicized nature of the tourist industry in Wales"*. The report concluded that the greatest threat to the language was the way in which "tourism encourages and promoted permanent in-migration".

Evidence emerged that there was a shortage of Welsh speakers in the tourist industry in Wales and that as a consequence of that, very few businesses made any creative use of indigenous culture.

One important piece of evidence received at a Regional Committee meeting on the language review called for a *"step change in our efforts to boost the presence of culture in tourism if it is to have any positive result on the future of the language"*. Amongst the measures advocated to improve the situation were:

- The tourism portfolio to be relocated within the National Assembly from the Economic Development portfolio to that of the Culture portfolio. In the opinion of the respondent, this would raise the status of the tourism industry and link the elements of tourism and the Welsh language together.
- Cultural tourism to be given a more central role and definitive focus within the WTB's activities, possibly in the form of a dedicated unit outside Cardiff in a predominantly Welsh-speaking area.
- A Centre of Excellence to be developed in the University of Wales, which would specialise in tourism, culture and heritage.

## **Some Issues for Committee Consideration**

Given the evidence received and the concerns raised about the impact of tourism on indigenous languages, the Committee may wish to consider how to develop more positive links between the two and to make recommendations to the Economic Development Committee and/or the Wales Tourist Board.

**The Committee may wish to make a statement in its report, re-enforcing the importance of bilingualism to the tourist industry and to encourage the Tourist Board to do more to**

**attract Welsh speakers into the industry, and businesses to make more use of indigenous culture.**

**Committee Secretariat April 2002**